

## **A. Background**

BLM Office: Arctic Field Office LLAKE01000

Lease/ Serial/ Case File No.: FF095710

**Applicant:** Adrian V. Rocha  
Ecosystems Center Marine Biological Laboratory  
University of Notre Dame  
100 Galvin Life Sciences Room 138  
Notre Dame, Indiana 46617

**Date of Proposed Action:** 25 May 2014-10 September 2014

**Proposed Action and Title/Type:** Historical wildfire research on arctic tundra; NPR-A Permit

### **Description of Proposed Action:**

The applicant, Adrian Rocha of the Ecosystems Center Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), has requested authorization for a permit to conduct research of historical wildfire areas on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to collect data for scientific research and effects of wildfire on arctic tundra ecosystems. This is a continuation of the research conducted under BLM permit (FF095710) in 2010.

The proposed action would authorize personnel from the University of Norte Dame, Life Sciences department to visit two separate wildfire burn sites within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) (see Figure 1, below). During these visits, the team will install solar-powered weather stations within the burn areas and in an adjacent area in June and remove them in August; and will also collect data including photographs and other images, descriptions of soils and vegetation within the burned areas, and soil and plant samples for chemical analyses for comparison with ongoing research concerning the 2007 Anaktuvuk River wildfire. Equipment that would remain at the site would consist of three meteorological tripod stations that are less than 3 meters in height and will be located at the coordinates of the yellow stick pins indicated on the Figure 1.

The team would make three visits to each of the sites which would take place in late May, late July, and late August of 2014. Access would be by helicopter from Atkasuk, Alaska, and they will only make short visits (4-6 hours) to each of the sites during each trip. The field party for each trip would include three scientists plus a helicopter pilot. Fuel for the helicopter will be obtained out of Atkasuk. The work will require a maximum of one to two helicopter landings per visit in each of the sites indicated on the attached map. The team expects that the towers and installation will cause no damage to the surrounding ecosystem.



Figure 1. Map noting locations of proposed research activity. Red and blue areas indicate past fire; yellow pins indicate locations where meteorological stations will be placed.

**Legal Description of Proposed Action (All Umiat Meridian) :**

Red Area				
Township	Range	Section		
9 North	31 West	36	Private Lands within 1/2 Mile	
9 North	30 West	30-32	Private Lands within 1Mile	
8 North	32 West	12-15, 21-28,33-36	Private Lands within 1/4 Mile	
8 North	31 West	2-36	Excluding Private Land	
8 North	30 West	17-20, 30-33	Private Lands within 1Mile	
7 North	32 West	3-18, 20-26, 36		
7 North	31 West	1-36		Tower Location
7 North	30 West	5-7, 18, 30-31		
6 North	31 West	1-17, 20-29, 32-36		
6 North	30 West	6,7,18-20, 28-33		
5 North	31 West	1-5, 8-17, 21-28, 33-36		
5 North	30 West	2-36		
5 North	29 West	18-21, 27-34		
4 North	32 West	1,2,11-15, 21-28, 32-36		
4 North	31 West	1-36		
4 North	30 West	1-36		
4 North	29 West	4-9, 16-21, 29-32		

3 North	32 West	1-4, 9-15		
3 North	31 West	1-30		
3 North	30 West	1-12, 14-22, 28-30		
3 North	29 West	5,6,7		
<b>Blue Area</b>				
<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>		
9 North	22 West	36		
9 North	21 West	26-35		
8 North	24 West	25, 26, 35, 36		
8 North	23 West	13-15, 19-36		
8 North	22 West	1-5, 7-36		
8 North	21 West	3-10, 17-20, 29-31		
7 North	24 West	1-3, 10-15, 22-27, 34-36		
7 North	23 West	1-36		
7 North	22 West	1-36		Tower Location
7 North	21 West	5-8, 17-20, 29-32		
6 North	23 West	1-3, 9-16, 21-27		
6 North	22 West	1-36		
6 North	21 West	4-9, 16-21, 28-33		
5 North	22 West	1-5, 8-17, 20-29		
5 North	21 West	5-8, 17-20, 29-30		
<b>Single Location</b>				
<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>		
7 North	26 West	1-36		Tower Location

## B. Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed action is subject to the following planning documents:

National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) 2012

The proposed action is also in conformance with the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act, which allows for the authorization of uses consistent with the purposes of the Act.

## A. Compliance with NEPA

The IAP/EIS Record of Decision for the NPR-A developed stipulations and best management practices applicable to all activities in NPR-A. The stipulations and best management practices applicable to the proposed action will be provided, along with project-specific mitigation, to the applicant and are entitled: “FF0995710 University of Notre Dame Summer 2014 Stipulations.”

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, or 516 DM 11.9,

Specifically the proposed action meets the criteria for a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, BLM H-1790-1 National Environmental Policy Act Handbook Appendix 4(F-10) BLM Categorical Exclusions:

**“Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities.”**

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

<b>Extraordinary Circumstances</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		<b>X</b>
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		<b>X</b>
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].		<b>X</b>
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		<b>X</b>
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		<b>X</b>
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		<b>X</b>
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		<b>X</b>
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		<b>X</b>
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		<b>X</b>
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		<b>X</b>
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		<b>X</b>

**Recommendation:** I have found that the proposed action is compatible with the LUP, and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The Proposed Action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 516 DM Chapter 2, Appendix 2. I recommend that the Proposed Action be allowed and that an Environmental Assessment of Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

**Date** May 16, 2014

/s/Lon Kelly  
Authorized Officer, Arctic Field Office

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